compensation for permanent measures of family planning and infrastructure for the primary health care.

Thrift Fund Scheme for Handloom Weavers is implemented for creation of a fund in the nature of a provident fund to enable the weavers to meet expenses towards their children's education, marriage, confinement or religious ceremony in the family.

The New Insurance Scheme provides insurance cover to handloom weavers against various types of risks such as loss of life, limbs, eyes etc., due to accident, damages to the dwelling units and raw materials due to natural calamities such as fire, lightning, flood cyclone etc., reimbursement of expenses of treatment towards injury, disease and illness, eye testing and maternity benefits.

In addition to the above schemes, in pursuance of the announcement made by the then Prime Minister on August 15, 2002, the following new schemes have been introduced during 2003-04 for handloom weavers in the country:

(i) Scheme for reimbursement of one time rebate @ 10% given by the handloom agencies on sale of handloom cloth during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05;

(ii) Integrated Handloom Training Project (IHTP); and

(iii) Bunkar Bima Yojana.

Scrapping special textile duty

1605. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the EU has conveyed to India of scrapping its discount on import duties on textile exporters of China and India to ensure that block market stays open to some of the world's poorest fabric producing countries;

(b) if so, to what extent this decision has been welcomed by India;

(c) whether global trade in textile and clothing will become fully liberalized from 2005;

(d) to what extent the EU scrapping special textile duty will benefit India; and

(e) to what extent it will help in improving its trade in textile with EU?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) to (e) On 7th July, 2004 the European Commission (EC) had adopted a Communication setting out the principles that will guide the European Union system of Generalized Trade Preferences (GSP) for developing countries for the period 2006-2015. The Communication proposes to target the GSP on the countries that need it most. Least developed countries and the most vulnerable developing countries have been specified in this category. According to the Communication, the Commission will bring forward a Regulation implementing the GSP for the next three years starting on 1st January, 2006. Any assessment of the impact of the changes in the EU, GSP scheme, including benefit to India and improvement in textile trade with the European Union can be made only after the implementing Regulation is announced by the EC.

In accordance with provisions of World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), the Agreement and the restrictions thereunder shall stand terminated on 1st January, 2005, on which date the textiles and clothing sector shall be fully integrated into GATT, 1994.

Sick handloom units

†1606. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any estimate has been made by the Government to the effect that handloom units have been closed due to increasing sickness in the handloom industry in the country during the last five years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether it is a fact that in the year 2003-04 there has been reduction in textiles production in handloom sector as compared to 1998-99; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi